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~~DNA CONSTRUCT TO CONFER
MULTIPLE TRAITS ON PLANTS~~

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

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This application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Application Serial Nos. 60/035,350 and 60/062,870.

The present invention is directed to a DNA construct to confer multiple traits on plants.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

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Control of plant virus diseases took a major step forward in the last decade when it was shown in 1986 that the tobacco mosaic virus ("TMV") coat protein gene that was expressed in transgenic tobacco conferred resistance to TMV (Powell-Abel, P., et al., "Delay of Disease Development in Transgenic Plants that Express the Tobacco Mosaic Virus Coat Protein Gene," Science, 232:738-43 (1986)). The concept of pathogen-derived resistance ("PDR"), which states that pathogen genes that are expressed in transgenic plants will confer resistance to infection by the homologous or related pathogens (Sanford, J.C., et al. "The Concept of Parasite-Derived Resistance - Deriving Resistance Genes from the Parasite's Own Genome," J. Theor. Biol., 113:395-405 (1985)) was introduced at about the same time. Since then, numerous reports have confirmed that PDR is a useful strategy for developing transgenic plants that are resistant to many different viruses (Lomonosoff, G.P., "Pathogen-Derived Resistance to Plant Viruses," Ann. Rev. Photopathol., 33:323-43 (1995)).

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Only eight years after the report by Beachy and colleagues (Powell-Abel, P., et al., "Delay of Disease Development in Transgenic Plants that Express the Tobacco Mosaic Virus Coat Protein Gene," Science, 232:738-43

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(1986)), Grumet, R., "Development of Virus Resistant Plants via Genetic Engineering," Plant Breeding Reviews, 12:47-49 (1994) reviewed the PDR literature and listed the successful development of virus resistant transgenic plants to at least 11 different groups of plant viruses. The vast majority of reports have utilized the coat protein genes of the viruses that are targeted for control. Although the testing of transgenic plants have been largely confined to laboratory and greenhouse experiments, a growing number of reports showed that resistance is effective under field conditions (e.g., Grumet, R., "Development of Virus Resistant Plants via Genetic Engineering," Plant Breeding Reviews, 12:47-49 (1994)). Two virus resistant crops have been deregulated by APHIS/USDA and thus are approved for unrestricted release into the environment in the U.S.A. Squash that are resistant to watermelon mosaic virus 2 and zucchini yellow mosaic potyviruses have been commercialized (Fuchs, M., et al., "Resistance of Transgenic Hybrid Squash ZW-20 Expressing the Coat Protein Genes of Zucchini Yellow Mosaic Virus and Watermelon Mosaic Virus 2 to Mixed Infections by Both Potyviruses," Bio/Technology, 13:1466-73 (1995); Tricoli, D.M., et al., "Field Evaluation of Transgenic Squash Containing Single or Multiple Virus Coat Protein Gene Constructs for Resistance to Cucumber Mosaic Virus, Watermelon Mosaic Virus 2, and Zucchini Yellow Mosaic Virus," Bio/Technology, 13:1458-65 (1995)). Also, a transgenic papaya that is resistant to papaya ringspot virus has been developed (Fitch, M. M. M., et al., "Virus Resistant Papaya Derived from Tissues Bombarded with the Coat Protein Gene of Papaya Ringspot Virus," Bio/Technology, 10:1466-72 (1992); Tennant, P.F., et al., "Differential Protection Against Papaya Ringspot Virus Isolates in Coat Protein Gene Transgenic Papaya and Classically Cross-

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Protected Papaya," Phytopathology, 84:1359-66 (1994)). This resistant transgenic papaya was recently deregulated by USDA/APHIS. Deregulation of the transgenic papaya is timely, because Hawaii's papaya industry is being
5 devastated by papaya ringspot virus. Undoubtedly, more crops will be deregulated and commercialized in the near future.

Interestingly, remarkable progress has been made in developing virus resistant transgenic plants
10 despite a poor understanding of the mechanisms involved in the various forms of pathogen-derived resistance (Lomonosoff, G.P., "Pathogen-Derived Resistance to Plant Viruses," Ann. Rev. Phytopathol., 33:323-43 (1995)). Although most reports deal with the use of coat protein
15 genes to confer resistance, a growing number of reports have shown that viral replicase (Golemboski, D.B., et al., "Plants Transformed with a Tobacco Mosaic Virus Nonstructural Gene Sequence are Resistant to the Virus," Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA, 87:6311-15 (1990)), movement
20 protein (e.g., Beck, D. L., et al., "Disruption of Virus Movement Confers Broad-Spectrum Resistance Against Systemic Infection by Plant Viruses with a Triple Gene Block," Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA, 91:10310-14 (1994)), NIa proteases of potyviruses (e.g., Maiti, I.B., et al.,
25 "Plants that Express a Potyvirus Proteinase Gene are Resistant to Virus Infection," Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA, 90:6110-14 (1993)), and other viral genes are effective. This led to the conclusion that any part of a plant viral genome gives rise to PDR. Furthermore, the
30 viral genes can be effective in the translatable and nontranslatable sense forms, and less frequently antisense forms (e.g., Baulcombe, D.C., "Mechanisms of Pathogen-Derived Resistance to Viruses in Transgenic Plants," Plant Cell, 8:1833-44 (1996); Dougherty, W. G.,
35 et al., "Transgenes and Gene Suppression: Telling us

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Something New?," Current Opinion in Cell Biology, 7:399-05 (1995); Lomonosoff, G.P., "Pathogen-Derived Resistance to Plant Viruses," Ann. Rev. Phytopathol., 33:323-43 (1995)).

- 5 RNA-mediated resistance is the form of PDR where there is clear evidence that viral proteins do not play a role in conferring resistance to the transgenic plant. The first clear cases for RNA-mediated resistance were reported in 1992 for tobacco etch ("TEV") potyvirus
10 (Lindbo, et al., "Pathogen-Derived Resistance to a Potyvirus Immune and Resistance Phenotypes in Transgenic Tobacco Expressing Altered Forms of a Potyvirus Coat Protein Nucleotide Sequence," Mol. Plant Microbe Interact., 5:144-53 (1992)), for potato virus Y ("PVY")
15 potyvirus by Van Der Vlugt, R.A.A., et al., "Evidence for Sense RNA-Mediated Protection to PVY in Tobacco Plants Transformed with the Viral Oat Protein Cistron," Plant Mol. Biol., 20:631-39 (1992), and for tomato spotted wilt ("TSWV") tospovirus by de Haan, P., et al.,
20 "Characterization of RNA-Mediated Resistance to Tomato Spotted Wilt Virus in Transgenic Tobacco Plants," Bio/Technology, 10:1133-37 (1992). Others confirmed the occurrence of RNA-mediated resistance with potyviruses (Smith, H.A., et al., "Transgenic Plant Virus Resistance
25 Mediated by Untranslatable Sense RNAs: Expression, Regulation, and Fate of Nonessential RNAs," Plant Cell, 6:1441-53 (1994)), potexviruses (Mueller, E., et al., "Homology-Dependent Resistance: Transgenic Virus
Resistance in Plants Related to Homology-Dependent Gene
30 Silencing," Plant Journal, 7:1001-13 (1995)), and TSWV and other tospoviruses (Pang, S.Z., et al., "Resistance of Transgenic Nicotiana Benthamiana Plants to Tomato Spotted Wilt and Impatiens Necrotic Spot Tospoviruses: Evidence of Involvement of the N Protein and N Gene RNA
35 in Resistance," Phytopathology, 84:243-49 (1994); Pang,

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the transcripts that go above a certain threshold is a viral transgene, the virus resistance state is observed in the plant, because the degradation mechanism also targets, for inactivation, the specific sequences of the incoming virus. The model also accounts for the 'recovery' of transgenic plants by suggesting that viral RNA from the systemically invading virus triggers the phenomenon in some transgenic plants that have two copies of the transgenes. Plants that had more than three copies of the transgenes caused the threshold level to be surpassed without the invasion of virus (Goodwin, J., et al., "Genetic and Biochemical Dissection of Transgenic RNA-Mediated Virus Resistance," Plant Cell, 8:95-105 (1996); Smith, H.A., et al., "Transgenic Plant Virus Resistance Mediated by Untranslatable Sense RNAs: Expression, Regulation, and Fate of Nonessential RNAs," Plant Cell, 6:1441-53 (1994)). Although the degradation mechanism is not clear, it is proposed that a cellular RNA dependent RNA polymerase ("RdRp") binds to the transcript and produces small fragments of antisense RNA which then bind to other transcripts to form duplexes which are then degraded by nucleases that specifically recognize RNA-RNA duplexes. This degradation mechanism is sequence specific, which accounts for the specificity of RNA-mediated resistance.

Work on PVX by Baulcombe and colleagues (English, J. J., et al., "Suppression of Virus Accumulation in Transgenic Plants Exhibiting Silencing of Nuclear Genes," Plant Cell, 8: 179-88 (1996); Mueller, E., et al., "Homology-Dependent Resistance: Transgenic Virus Resistance in Plants Related to Homology-Dependent Gene Silencing," Plant Journal, 7:1001-13 (1995)) confirmed and extended the results by Dougherty and colleagues. An aberrant RNA model which is a modification of the RNA threshold model proposed by

Dougherty and colleagues was proposed. The features of the model are similar to Dougherty's except that it states that the RNA level is not the sole trigger to activate the cellular degradation mechanism, but instead aberrant RNA that are produced during the transcription of the transgene plays an important part in activating the cytoplasmic cellular mechanism that degrades specific RNA. The production of aberrant RNA may be enhanced by positional effects of the transgene on the chromosome and by methylation of the transgene DNA. The precise nature of the aberrant RNA is not defined, but it may contain a characteristic that makes it a preferred template for the production of antisense RNA by the host encoded RdRp (Baulcombe, D.C., "Mechanisms of Pathogen-Derived Resistance to Viruses in Transgenic Plants," Plant Cell, 8:1833-44 (1996); English, J. J., et al., "Suppression of Virus Accumulation in Transgenic Plants Exhibiting Silencing of Nuclear Genes," Plant Cell, 8: 179-88 (1996)). Thus, the model also proposes that RdRp and antisense molecules are involved in the degradation mechanism. Baulcombe and colleagues confirmed that plants which show low steady state transgene levels have multiple copies of transgenes and that the low steady state RNA and the accompanying resistant state is due to post-transcriptional gene silencing. The term homology-dependent resistance was proposed to describe the resistance in plants that show homology-dependent gene silencing (Mueller, E., et al., "Homology-Dependent Resistance: Transgenic Virus Resistance in Plants Related to Homology-Dependent Gene Silencing," Plant Journal, 7:1001-13 (1995)).

Experiments with TSWV tospovirus (Pang, S.Z., et al., "Post-Transcriptional Transgene Silencing and Consequent Tospovirus Resistance in Transgenic Lettuce are Affected by Transgene Dosage and Plant Development,"

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Plant Journal, 9:899-09 (1996); Prins, M., et al.,
"Engineered RNA Mediated Resistance to Tomato Spotted
Wilt Virus is Sequence Specific," Mol. Plant Microbe
Interact., 9:416-18 (1996)) and cowpea mosaic comovirus
5 (Sijen, T., et al., "RNA-Mediated Virus Resistance: Role
of Repeated Transgene and Delineation of Targeted
Regions," Plant Cell, 8:2227-94 (1996)) also showed that
resistance in transgenic plants is a consequence of post-
transcriptional gene silencing. Pang, S.Z., et al.,
10 "Post-Transcriptional Transgene Silencing and Consequent
Tospovirus Resistance in Transgenic Lettuce are Affected
by Transgene Dosage and Plant Development," Plant
Journal, 9:899-09 (1996) showed that post-transcriptional
gene silencing in transgenic lettuce expressing the N
15 gene of TSWV was influenced by gene dosage and by the
developmental stage of the plant. The effect of
developmental stage on post-transcriptional gene
silencing of transgenes and their effect on resistance
had not been previously shown for transgenic plants
20 expressing viral genes, but had been shown to occur in
plants expressing other transgenes (de Carvalho, F., et
al., "Suppression of beta-1,3-glucanase Transgene
Expression in Homozygous Plants," EMBO J., 11:2595-02
(1992)). Post-transcriptional gene silencing could also
25 ~~account for the correlation of low steady state level of~~
N gene RNA in transgenic tobacco showing very high but
specific resistance (Pang, S.Z., et al., "Different
Mechanisms Protect Transgenic Tobacco Against Tomato
Spotted Wilt and Impatiens Necrotic Spot Tospoviruses,"
30 Bio/Technology, 11:819-24 (1993)). Prins, M., et al.,
"Engineered RNA-Mediated Resistance to Tomato Spotted
Wilt Virus is Sequence Specific," Molecular Plant Microbe
Interactions, 9:416-18 (1996) also reported that post-
transcriptional gene silencing occurred with transgenic
35 tobacco expressing the N gene and nonstructural gene of

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the mRNA. Interestingly, it was found that tobacco with other parts of the TSWV genome were not resistant. They suggested, as one explanation, that those gene fragments which did not confer resistance may not fit the criteria for inducing post-transcriptional gene silencing. Sijen, T., et al., "RNA-Mediated Virus Resistance: Role of Repeated Transgene and Delineation of Targeted Regions," Plant Cell, 8:2227-94 (1996) showed that resistance of transgenic plants expressing the movement protein, replicase, or coat protein were due to post-transcriptional gene silencing. This data also suggested that the 3' region of the movement protein transgene mRNA is the initial target of the silencing mechanism.

The present invention is directed to producing improved disease resistant plants.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is directed to a DNA construct formed from a fusion gene which includes a trait DNA molecule and a silencer DNA molecule. The trait DNA molecule has a length that is insufficient to impart a desired trait to plants transformed with the trait DNA molecule. The silencer DNA molecule is operatively coupled to the trait DNA molecule with the trait and silencer DNA molecules collectively having sufficient length to impart the trait to plants transformed with the DNA construct. Expression systems, host cells, plants, and plant seeds containing the DNA construct are disclosed.

In an alternative embodiment of the present invention, the DNA construct can be a fusion gene comprising a plurality of trait DNA molecules at least some of which having a length that is insufficient to impart that trait to plants transformed with that trait

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DNA molecule. However, the plurality of trait DNA molecules collectively have a length sufficient to impart their traits to plants transformed with the DNA construct and to effect post-transcriptional silencing of the fusion gene. Expression systems, host cells, plants, and plant seeds containing this embodiment of the DNA construct are disclosed.

The present invention is particular directed to preparing plants which are resistant to multiple viruses. It is well known that particular plant types are often susceptible to more than one virus. Although PDR is an excellent approach to controlling the damaging effects of plant viruses, incorporating multiple virus resistance in a given plant can be challenging. For example, identifying and producing full length viral genes to transform plants can be expensive and time consuming. Further, such genes may be so large that they need to be incorporated in different expression systems which must be separately incorporated in plants.

Rather than attempting to incorporate full length viral genes in a plant, the present invention uses short fragments of such genes to impart resistance to the plant against a plurality of viral pathogens. These short fragments, which each by themselves have insufficient length to impart such resistance, are more easily and cost effectively produced than full length genes. There is no need to include in the plant separate promoters for each of the fragments; only a single promoter is required. Moreover, such viral gene fragments can preferably be incorporated in a single expression system to produce transgenic plants with a single transformation event.

The impact of this simple strategy for multiple virus resistant transgenic plants could have far reaching effects in agriculture. An example is the case of papaya

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Another use of the present invention involves imparting resistance to cucurbits against a number of viruses. For example, in squash, the present invention can be utilized to impart multiple resistance to zucchini yellow mosaic virus, papaya ringspot virus, watermelon mosaic virus II, and squash mosaic virus. For example, a construct containing a portion of the coat protein encoding gene or a portion of the replicase encoding gene from each of these viruses, driven by a single promoter, can be produced and transformed into squash. The resulting transgenic squash is resistant to all of these viruses.

In addition to conferring on plants resistance to multiple viral diseases, the present invention can be utilized to impart other traits to plants. It is often desirable to incorporate a number of traits to a transgenic plant besides disease resistance. For example, color, enzyme production, etc. may be desirable traits to confer on a plant. However, transforming plants with a plurality of such traits encounter the same difficulties discussed above with respect to disease resistance. The present invention may be likewise useful in alleviating these problems with respect to traits other than disease resistance.

One problem with transforming plants to contain multiple traits is the possibility that not all of them will be successfully imparted. For example, where there are 4 new traits to be imparted to a transgenic plant, there is a 10% likelihood that each expression event will occur, making the probability of imparting all traits in a plant produced in accordance with the present invention much higher than in a plant transformed with full length trait genes driven by separate promoters. More particularly, the probability of expressing all 4 traits

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in the latter is 0.0001 (i.e., 0.1 x 0.1 x 0.1 x 0.1), while the probability in the present invention is 0.1.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

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Figure 1 is a map of the transgenes on the N gene of TSWV-BL.

Figure 2 shows the protection of transgenic plants against infection by TSWV-BL. R₁ plants of selected lines (a 1/2N high expressor 8-127 and a 1/2N low expressor 8-2, as determined by Northern blot analysis) were assayed by DAS-ELISAs for *nptII* using an *nptII* ELISA kit (5 Prime to 3 Prime, Inc.). The ELISA negative nontransgenic segregates (*nptII* ELISA readings of 0.00-0.02 OD_{405nm}) were used as controls. The same plants were then challenged with TSWV-BL. Plants were examined every other day for the appearance of systemic symptoms, and any plant displaying symptoms on noninoculated leaves was recorded as systemic infection.

Figures 3A-B show transgene silencing in the 1/2N low expressor 8-2. Figure 3A is a Northern blot analysis of 8-2 and 8-127 R₁ plants. Total RNAs were isolated from transgenic plants (15 µg per lane) and analyzed by Northern blot. Lanes 1 through 6, the silenced 8-2 R₁ plants; lanes 7-12, the not silenced 8-127 R₁ plants; lane 13, a nontransgenic control. Figure 3B is a nuclear run-off transcription analysis of R₁ plants. Labeled nuclear RNAs were hybridized to restriction enzyme-digested N gene, *nptII* and actin fragments separated on agarose gel and blotted onto membrane. The nuclei used in the assays were isolated from an 8-2 R₁ plant and an 8-127 R₁ plant.

Figure 4 compares transcript accumulations in plants expressing the N gene fragments of different lengths. Lanes 1 and 2, two not silenced, virus

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susceptible R₁ plants with the full-length N gene; lane 3, a silenced, virus resistant R₁ plant with 2/2N gene; lane 4, a not silenced, virus susceptible R₁ plant with the 2/2N gene; lanes 5-8; four not silenced, virus susceptible R₁ plants with the 3/4N gene; lanes 9-12, four not silenced, virus susceptible R₁ plants with the 5/8N gene.

Figure 5 shows a Northern analysis of R₁ plants containing the GFP/N fusions. Leaves were harvested for RNA isolation when the plants were at the 5-6 leaf stage. Ten μ g per lane of total RNA were used for Northern blot which was probed with the N gene of TSWV-BL (top row) or GFP gene (bottom row). After removal of leaf samples for RNA analysis, the plants were inoculated with TSWV-BL and assigned as either resistant ("R") or susceptible ("S") depending on the presence or absence of systemic symptoms at 14 days post-inoculation. Lanes 1-2, GFP+5/8N-1 R₁ plant; lanes 3-6, GFP+3/4N-5 R₁ plants; lane 7, GFP+3/4N-6 R₁ plants; lane 8, GFP+3/4N-23 R₁ plants; lanes 9-10 and 12, GFP+3/4N-8 R₁ plants; lane 11, a nontransformed plant.

Figure 6 is a map of the transgenes used in this study. A nontranslatable N gene segment was transcriptionally fused with GFP or CP-TuMV gene. Each transgene was driven by double enhanced CaMV 35S promoter, 5'-untranslated leader of alfalfa mosaic virus, and 3'-untranslated sequence of the nopaline synthase gene. The whole expression cassette was inserted into the plant transformation vector, pBIN19 (Clontech Laboratories, Inc.), and then introduced into *Nicotiana benthamiana* via leaf disc transformation by *Agrobacterium tumefaciens* LBA4404. 2/2 N is the second half, 3/4 N is the third quarter, 5/8N is the 5/8th of the N gene of TSWV-BL. Pang et al., "Nontarget DNA Sequences Reduce the Transgene Length Necessary for RNA-Mediated Tospovirus Resistance in Transgenic Plants," Proc. Natl.

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Acad. Sci. USA, 94:8261-66 (1997), which is hereby incorporated by reference.

Figure 7 is a schematic diagram of TMV-GFP and TMV-GFP-NP. TMV-GFP was obtained from Dr. C.A. Holt.

5 The N gene sequence of TSWV was transcriptionally fused with GFP at the NotI site. *In vitro* transcription was performed as described by Casper et al., "Expression of the Green Fluorescent Protein-Encoding Gene from Tobacco Mosaic Virus-Based Vector," Gene, 173:69-73 (1996), which
10 is hereby incorporated by reference.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

15 The present invention is directed to a DNA construct formed from a fusion gene which includes a trait DNA molecule and a silencer DNA molecule. The trait DNA molecule has a length that is insufficient to impart a desired trait to plants transformed with the trait DNA molecule. The silencer DNA molecule is
20 operatively coupled to the trait DNA molecule with the trait and silencer DNA molecules collectively having sufficient length to impart the trait to plants transformed with the DNA construct.

25 In an alternative embodiment of the present invention, the DNA construct can be a fusion gene comprising plurality of trait DNA molecules at least some of which having a length that is insufficient to impart that trait to plants transformed with that trait DNA molecule. However, the plurality of trait DNA molecules
30 collectively have a length sufficient to impart the traits to plants transformed with the DNA construct and to effect post-transcriptional silencing of the fusion gene.

35 A particularly preferred aspect of the present invention is where the DNA construct includes a plurality

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of trait DNA molecules each having a length insufficient to impart the trait to plants transformed with the trait DNA molecule alone. It is also possible for some of the trait DNA molecules to have a length sufficient to impart their respective trait; however, not all such DNA
5 molecules will have such a length.

One aspect of the present invention relates to the use of trait DNA molecules which are heterologous to the plant -- e.g., DNA molecules that confer disease
10 resistance to plants transformed with the DNA construct. The present invention is useful in plants for imparting resistance to a wide variety of pathogens including viruses, bacteria, fungi, viroids, phytoplasmas, nematodes, and insects. The present invention may also
15 be used in mammals to impart genetic traits. Resistance, *inter alia*, to the following viruses can be achieved by the method of the present invention: tomato spotted wilt virus, impatiens necrotic spot virus, groundnut ringspot virus, potato virus Y, potato virus X, tobacco mosaic
20 virus, turnip mosaic virus, tobacco etch virus, papaya ringspot virus, tomato mottle virus, tomato yellow leaf curl virus, or combinations thereof. Resistance, *inter alia*, to the following bacteria can also be imparted to plants in accordance with present invention: *Pseudomonas solanacearum*, *Pseudomonas syringae* pv. *tabaci*, *Xanthomonas campestris* pv. *pelargonii*, and *Agrobacterium tumefaciens*.
25 Plants can be made resistant, *inter alia*, to the following fungi by use of the method of the present invention: *Fusarium oxysporum* and *Phytophthora infestans*. Suitable DNA molecules include a DNA molecule encoding a coat protein, a replicase, a DNA molecule not encoding protein, a DNA molecule encoding a viral gene product, or combinations thereof.
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The DNA molecule conferring disease resistance
35 can be positioned within the DNA construct in sense

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orientation. Alternatively, it can have an antisense orientation. Antisense RNA technology involves the production of an RNA molecule that is complementary to the messenger RNA molecule of a target gene; the
5 antisense RNA can potentially block all expression of the targeted gene. In the anti-virus context, plants are made to express an antisense RNA molecule corresponding to a viral RNA (that is, the antisense RNA is an RNA molecule which is complementary to a plus sense RNA
10 species encoded by an infecting virus). Such plants may show a slightly decreased susceptibility to infection by that virus. Such a complementary RNA molecule is termed antisense RNA.

The present invention is also used to confer
15 traits other than disease resistance on plants. For example, DNA molecules which impart a plant genetic trait can be used as the DNA trait molecule of the present invention. In this aspect of the present invention, suitable trait DNA molecules encode for desired color,
20 enzyme production, or combinations thereof.

The silencer DNA molecule of the present invention can be selected from virtually any nucleic acid which effects gene silencing. This involves the cellular mechanism to degrade mRNA homologous to the transgene
25 mRNA. The silencer DNA molecule can be heterologous to the plant, need not interact with the trait DNA molecule in the plant, and can be positioned 3' to the trait DNA molecule. For example, the silencer DNA molecule can be a viral cDNA molecule, a jellyfish green fluorescence
30 protein encoding DNA molecule, a plant DNA molecule, or combinations thereof.

While not wishing to be bound by theory, by use of the construct of the present invention, it is believed that post-transcriptional gene silencing is achieved.
35 More particularly, the silencer DNA molecule is believed

THE "SILENCER"

to boost the level of heterologous RNA within the cell above a threshold level. This activates the degradation mechanism by which viral resistance is achieved.

It is possible for the DNA construct of the present invention to be configured so that the trait and silencer DNA molecules encode RNA molecules which are translatable. As result, that RNA molecule will be translated at the ribosomes to produce the protein encoded by the DNA construct. Production of proteins in this manner can be increased by joining the cloned gene encoding the DNA construct of interest with synthetic double-stranded oligonucleotides which represent a viral regulatory sequence (i.e., a 5' untranslated sequence). See U.S. Patent No. 4,820,639 to Gehrke and U.S. Patent No. 5,849,527 to Wilson which are hereby incorporated by reference.

Alternatively, the DNA construct of the present invention can be configured so that the trait and silencer DNA molecules encode mRNA which is not translatable. This is achieved by introducing into the DNA molecule one or more premature stop codons, adding one or more bases (except multiples of 3 bases) to displace the reading frame, removing the translation initiation codon, etc. See U.S. Patent No. 5,583,021 to Dougherty et al., which is hereby incorporated by reference.

The subject DNA construct can be incorporated in cells using conventional recombinant DNA technology. Generally, this involves inserting the DNA construct into an expression system to which the DNA construct is heterologous (i.e. not normally present). The heterologous DNA construct may be inserted into the expression system or vector in proper sense orientation and correct reading frame. The vector contains the

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AUG, which encodes the amino-terminal methionine of the protein. The SD sequences are complementary to the 3'-end of the 16S rRNA (ribosomal RNA) and probably promote binding of mRNA to ribosomes by duplexing with the rRNA
5 to allow correct positioning of the ribosome. For a review on maximizing gene expression, see Roberts and Lauer, Methods in Enzymology, 68:473 (1979), which is hereby incorporated by reference.

Promoters vary in their "strength" (i.e. their
10 ability to promote transcription). For the purposes of expressing a cloned gene, it is desirable to use strong promoters in order to obtain a high level of transcription and, hence, expression of the gene. Depending upon the host cell system utilized, any one of
15 a number of suitable promoters may be used. For instance, when cloning in *E. coli*, its bacteriophages, or plasmids, promoters such as the T7 phage promoter, *lac* promoter, *trp* promoter, *recA* promoter, ribosomal RNA promoter, the P_R and P_L promoters of coliphage lambda and
20 others, including but not limited, to *lacUV5*, *ompF*, *bla*, *lpp*, and the like, may be used to direct high levels of transcription of adjacent DNA segments. Additionally, a hybrid *trp-lacUV5* (*tac*) promoter or other *E. coli* promoters produced by recombinant DNA or other synthetic
25 DNA techniques may be used to provide for transcription of the inserted gene.

Bacterial host cell strains and expression vectors may be chosen which inhibit the action of the promoter unless specifically induced. In certain
30 operations, the addition of specific inducers is necessary for efficient transcription of the inserted DNA. For example, the *lac* operon is induced by the addition of lactose or IPTG (isopropylthio-beta-D-galactoside). A variety of other operons, such as *trp*,
35 *pro*, etc., are under different controls.

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pea small subunit of the ribulose 1,5-bisphosphate
carboxylase-oxygenase (ssRUBISCO) E9 gene.

In producing transgenic plants, the DNA
construct in a vector described above can be
5 microinjected directly into plant cells by use of
micropipettes to transfer mechanically the recombinant
DNA. Crossway, Mol. Gen. Genetics, 202:179-85 (1985),
which is hereby incorporated by reference. The genetic
material may also be transferred into the plant cell
10 using polyethylene glycol. Krens, et al., Nature,
296:72-74 (1982), which is hereby incorporated by
reference.

Another approach to transforming plant cells
with the DNA construct is particle bombardment (also
15 known as biolistic transformation) of the host cell.
This can be accomplished in one of several ways. The
first involves propelling inert or biologically active
particles at cells. This technique is disclosed in U.S.
Patent Nos. 4,945,050, 5,036,006, and 5,100,792, all to
20 Sanford et al., which are hereby incorporated by
reference. Generally, this procedure involves propelling
inert or biologically active particles at the cells under
conditions effective to penetrate the outer surface of
the cell and to be incorporated within the interior
25 thereof. When inert particles are utilized, a vector
containing the DNA construct can be introduced into the
cell by coating the particles with the vector containing
that heterologous DNA construct. Alternatively, the
target cell can be surrounded by the vector so that the
30 vector is carried into the cell by the wake of the
particle. Biologically active particles (e.g., dried
bacterial cells containing the vector and heterologous
DNA construct) can also be propelled into plant cells.

Yet another method of introduction is fusion of
35 protoplasts with other entities, either minicells, cells,
lysosomes or other fusible lipid-surfaced bodies.

THESE SECTIONS

Fraley, et al., Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA, 79:1859-63 (1982), which is hereby incorporated by reference.

The DNA molecule may also be introduced into the plant cells by electroporation. Fromm et al., Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA, 82:5824 (1985), which is hereby incorporated by reference. In this technique, plant protoplasts are electroporated in the presence of plasmids containing the expression cassette. Electrical impulses of high field strength reversibly permeabilize biomembranes allowing the introduction of the plasmids. Electroporated plant protoplasts reform the cell wall, divide, and regenerate.

Another method of introducing the DNA molecule into plant cells is to infect a plant cell with *Agrobacterium tumefaciens* or *A. rhizogenes* previously transformed with the gene. Under appropriate conditions known in the art, the transformed plant cells are grown to form shoots or roots, and develop further into plants. Generally, this procedure involves inoculating the plant tissue with a suspension of bacteria and incubating the tissue for 48 to 72 hours on regeneration medium without antibiotics at 25-28°C.

Agrobacterium is a representative genus of the gram-negative family Rhizobiaceae. Its species are responsible for crown gall (*A. tumefaciens*) and hairy root disease (*A. rhizogenes*). The plant cells in crown gall tumors and hairy roots are induced to produce amino acid derivatives known as opines, which are catabolized only by the bacteria. The bacterial genes responsible for expression of opines are a convenient source of control elements for chimeric expression cassettes. In addition, assaying for the presence of opines can be used to identify transformed tissue.

Heterologous genetic sequences can be introduced into appropriate plant cells, by means of the

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Ti plasmid of *A. tumefaciens* or the Ri plasmid of *A. rhizogenes*. The Ti or Ri plasmid is transmitted to plant cells on infection by Agrobacterium and is stably integrated into the plant genome. J. Schell, Science, 5 237:1176-83 (1987), which is hereby incorporated by reference.

After transformation, the transformed plant cells must be regenerated.

Plant regeneration from cultured protoplasts is 10 described in Evans et al., Handbook of Plant Cell Cultures, Vol. 1: (MacMillan Publishing Co., New York, 1983); and Vasil I.R. (ed.), Cell Culture and Somatic Cell Genetics of Plants, Acad. Press, Orlando, Vol. I, 15 1984, and Vol. III (1986), which are hereby incorporated by reference.

It is known that practically all plants can be regenerated from cultured cells or tissues, including but not limited to, all major species of sugarcane, sugar beets, cotton, fruit trees, and legumes.

20 Means for regeneration vary from species to species of plants, but generally a suspension of transformed protoplasts or a petri plate containing explants is first provided. Callus tissue is formed and shoots may be induced from callus and subsequently 25 rooted. Alternatively, embryo formation can be induced in the callus tissue. These embryos germinate as natural embryos to form plants. The culture media will generally contain various amino acids and hormones, such as auxin and cytokinins. It is also advantageous to add glutamic 30 acid and proline to the medium, especially for such species as corn and alfalfa. Efficient regeneration will depend on the medium, on the genotype, and on the history of the culture. If these three variables are controlled, then regeneration is usually reproducible and repeatable.

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After the expression cassette is stably incorporated in transgenic plants, it can be transferred to other plants by sexual crossing. Any of a number of standard breeding techniques can be used, depending upon
5 the species to be crossed.

Once transgenic plants of this type are produced, the plants themselves can be cultivated in accordance with conventional procedure so that the DNA construct is present in the resulting plants.
10 Alternatively, transgenic seeds are recovered from the transgenic plants. These seeds can then be planted in the soil and cultivated using conventional procedures to produce transgenic plants.

The present invention can be utilized in
15 conjunction with a wide variety of plants or their seeds. Suitable plants include dicots and monocots. More particularly, useful crop plants can include: alfalfa, rice, wheat, barley, rye, cotton, sunflower, peanut, corn, potato, sweet potato, bean, pea, chicory, lettuce,
20 endive, cabbage, brussel sprout, beet, parsnip, turnip, cauliflower, broccoli, turnip, radish, spinach, onion, garlic, eggplant, pepper, celery, carrot, squash, pumpkin, zucchini, cucumber, apple, pear, melon, citrus, strawberry, grape, raspberry, pineapple, soybean,
25 tobacco, tomato, sorghum, papaya, and sugarcane. Examples of suitable ornamental plants are: *Arabidopsis thaliana*, *Saintpaulia*, petunia, pelargonium, poinsettia, chrysanthemum, carnation, and zinnia.

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EXAMPLES

Example 1 - Cloning and Transformation.

The N gene (Pang, S.-Z., et al., "Resistance to
35 Heterologous Isolates of Tomato Spotted Wilt Virus in Transgenic Plants Expressing its Nucleocapsid Protein

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The forward primers for the N gene fragments were designed to contain an out-of-frame ATG and/or stop codons to ensure the production of untranslatable N gene transcripts. The PCR-amplified N gene fragments (Table 2) were cloned in the sense orientation into the *Nco*I site of plant expression vector pBI525 (Pang, S.-Z., et al., "Resistance to Heterologous Isolates of Tomato Spotted Wilt Virus in Transgenic Plants Expressing its Nucleocapsid Protein Gene," *Phytopathology*, 82:1223-29 (1992), which is hereby incorporated by reference).

Table 2. Reactions of R_1 plants expressing the N gene fragments to inoculations with the TSWV-BL isolate.

Gene	Size (bp)	# tested		# resistant	Reactions of test plants ^a		
		lines	plants	lines	HS	HT	HR
control			239		239		
2/2N	453	7	118	5	63	26	29
m1/2N	411	6	108	6	36	17	55
1/2N	387	5	99	2	75	4	20
4/4N	235	7	89	0	89		
3/4N	218	12	145	0	145		
1/4N	194	12	134	0	134		
2/4N	193	5	64	0	64		
5/8N	110	7	85	0	85		
6/8N	108	13	162	0	162		
1/8N	102	14	170	0	170		
2/8N	92	8	63	0	63		

^a 30-fold diluted leaf extracts of the *N. benthamiana* plants infected with TSWV-BL were applied to three upper leaves of the plants at the 5-7 leaf stage. Data were taken every other day for at least 45 days. The reactions could be grouped into three phenotypes: 1) highly susceptible ("HS"), typical

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5 systemic symptoms were observed at 5-10 days after inoculation; 2) highly tolerant ("HT"), systemic symptoms were significantly delayed (more than 10 days post inoculation); 3) highly resistant ("HR"), the plants remained symptom free throughout their life cycles. See Figure 1 for the definition of the N gene of TSWV-BL.

10 For construction of various N gene fragment fusions with green fluorescent protein ("GFP"), the translatable GFP open reading frame ("ORF") was amplified with GFP primers (Table 1) from the plasmid pGFP (Clontech, Palo Alto, CA) and cloned as transcriptional fusions into the 5' NcoI site of the N gene fragments 15 2/2N, 3/4N, and 5/8N in pBI525. The resulting GFP/N fusions contained translatable GFP ORF followed by untranslatable N gene fragments of different lengths as the 3' untranslated regions of the GFP gene.

20 The resulting above plant expression vectors were digested with *HindIII* and *EcoRI* (partial digestion where necessary), and the *HindIII*-*EcoRI* fragments containing the corresponding gene cassettes were isolated and introduced into the same sites of pBIN19. The resulting binary vectors were transferred to 25 *Agrobacterium tumefaciens* LBA4404 and the *A. tumefaciens* containing the vectors were used to inoculate leaf discs of *Nicotiana benthamiana* plants, essentially as described by Horsch et al. (Horsch, R.B., et al., "A Simple and General Method for Transferring Genes into Plants," 30 Science, 227:1229-31 (1985), which is hereby incorporated by reference).

35 **Example 2 - ELISA, Northern Blot Analyses of Transgenic Plants.**

Double antibody sandwich enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay ("DAS-ELISA") was used to detect the *nptII* enzyme in transgenic plants using an *nptII* ELISA kit (5 Prime to 3 Prime, Inc). Northern blot was

expression vector pBI525. This vector utilized the double enhanced CaMV 35S promoter, the 5' untranslated region from alfalfa mosaic virus ("AIMV"), and the 3' untranslated region of nopaline synthase gene. The resulting expression cassettes were used to obtain transgenic *N. benthamiana* plants via *Agrobacterium* mediated transformation.

Transgenic R₁ seedlings were initially screened with the nptII ELISA to identify nontransgenic segregates from the R₁ transgenic populations. In order to exclude the possibility of escapes and avoid human bias during inoculation, nontransgenic segregates from each of the lines were inoculated as internal controls along with transgenic R₁ plants. Additionally, nontransformed *N. benthamiana* plants were also included in each inoculation experiments. Reactions of the inoculated R₁ plants to TSWV-BL are summarized in Figure 2 and Table 2. Unlike negative control plants which were completely susceptible to the virus, expression of large N gene fragments (387-453 bp, one half N gene) conferred high levels of resistance to TSWV-BL in 20-51% of R₁ plants and tolerance to tospovirus infection in 4-22% of R₁ plants. The R₁ plants were also shown to be resistant to a closely related TSWV-10W isolate but not to the distantly related Impatiens necrotic spot virus ("INSV") (Law, M.D., et al., "The M RNA of Impatiens Necrotic Spot Tospovirus (Bunyaviridae) Has an Ambisense Genomic Organization," Virology, 188:732-41 (1992), which is hereby incorporated by reference) or Groundnut ringspot virus ("GRSV") (Pang, S.Z., et al., "The Biological Properties of a Distinct Tospovirus and Sequence Analysis of its MRNA," Phytopathology, 83:728-33 (1993), which is hereby incorporated by reference) isolates. Northern analysis on selected lines showed correlation of the resistant phenotype with low levels of the N gene fragment

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transcript accumulation (Fig. 3A). To confirm that the reduced steady-state mRNA levels of the N gene fragments were due to post-transcriptional down-regulation of the transgene, nuclear run-off transcription analysis was performed. Using the endogenous actin as a control, the N gene fragments were found to be transcribed in the silenced progenies at higher rates than in the nonsilenced high-expressing progenies (Fig. 3B). These results collectively suggested that the resistance observed was the result of post-transcriptional transgene silencing, which affected the steady-state mRNA accumulation but not transcription rate.

R₁ plants expressing the small N gene fragments (92-235 bp, one fourth to one eighth NP) were similarly inoculated with TSWV-BL and other tospovirus isolates, and all of them were susceptible to tospovirus infection (Table 2). Northern blot analysis of selected R₁ plants showed that the transcript level of the N gene fragments correlated with the length of transgenes. As shown in Fig. 4, the transcripts of large transgenes generally accumulated at much higher levels than those of small transgenes in the nonsilenced R₁ plants (Fig. 4). This result suggested that the small N gene fragments were not effectively transcribed in the nuclei, or were transcribed at similar rates but were not properly processed, transported, or stable in the cytoplasm. As a result, there was no induction of transgene silencing in those small transgene plants. In fact, a number of representative lines expressing the small N gene fragments were analyzed by nuclear run-off transcription analysis, and the results showed no evidence that post-transcriptional silencing took place in any of those tested lines.

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Example 6 - Fusions of the Small N Gene Fragments with GFP Confer RNA-Mediated Tospovirus Resistance.

5 It was possible that the inability of the small
N gene fragments to confer RNA-mediated resistance was
because the transgenes were too small to be expressed and
accumulate at high levels (e.g., inefficient
transcription, processing, transport or less stability)
10 or because the small N gene fragments fell below the
minimal length of homology for trans-inactivation of the
incoming virus genome. Various N gene fragments (110,
218, and 453 bp) were fused to the 3' end of the GFP
gene, as described *supra*. Expression of such fusions in
15 plants cells produces transcripts consisting of
functional GFP open reading frame immediately followed by
the respective N fragments as the 3' untranslated region.
R₀ plant expressing these fusions were inoculated with the
homologous isolate TSWV-BL and inoculation results are
20 summarized in Table 3. As a control, transgenic R₀ plants
expressing GFP alone displayed typically systemic
symptoms at 5-10 days post inoculation. On the other
hand, all GFP/N fusions conferred various levels of
resistance to TSWV-BL (Table 3), including the small N
25 fragments (110 bp and 218 bp) which provided no
protection against TSWV-BL when expressed alone in plants
(Table 2).

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Table 3. Reactions of R₀ plants expressing GFP/N fusions to inoculations with the TSWV-BL isolate.

Gene	Size(bp)	# line	Reactions of test plants ^a		
			HS	HT	HR
GFP	720+0	8	8		
GFP+5/8N	720+110	13	11	1	1
GFP+3/4N	720+218	8	2		6
GFP+2/2N	720+453	14	5	1	8

^a 30-fold diluted leaf extracts of the *N. benthamiana* plants infected with TSWV-BL were applied to three upper leaves of the plants at the 5-7 leaf stage. Data were taken every other day for at least 45 days. The reactions could be grouped into three phenotypes: 1) highly susceptible ("HS"), typical systemic symptoms were observed at 5-10 days after inoculation; 2) highly tolerant ("HT"), systemic symptom was significantly delayed (more than 10 day post inoculation); 3) highly resistant ("HR"), the plants remained symptom free throughout their life cycles.

R₁ progeny from selected R₀ lines were similarly inoculated and they showed similar levels of protection against TSWV-BL (Table 4).

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Table 4. Reactions of R₁ plants expressing GFP/N fusions to inoculations with the TSWV-BL isolate.

Gene	line #	# plants tested	Reactions of test plants ^a		
			HS	HT	HR
GFP+5/8N	1	18	10	7	1
	3	14	14		
GFP+3/4N	5	17		8	9
	6	18		6	12
	7	18	15		3
	22	20			20
	23	20	16	1	3
	24	16			16
GFP+2/2N	8	15	9	1	5
	9	18	18		
	10	16	16		
	26	22	19	3	
	27	19	19		
	28	21	18	1	2
	29	21		1	20

^a 30-fold diluted leaf extracts of the *N. benthamiana* plants infected with TSWV-BL were applied to three upper leaves of the plants at the 5-7 leaf stage. Data were taken every other day for at least 45 days. The reactions could be grouped into three phenotypes: 1) highly susceptible ("HS"), typical systemic symptoms were observed at 5-10 days after inoculation; 2) highly tolerant ("HT"), systemic symptom was significantly delayed (more than 10 day post inoculation); 3) highly resistant ("HR"), the plants remained symptom free throughout their life cycles.

The R₁ plants were also shown to be resistant to a closely related TSWV-10W isolate but not to the distantly related INSV or GRSV isolate. These results suggest that the GFP gene triggered gene silencing which degraded GFP and the

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Example 7 - Fusions of the Small N Gene Fragments with GFP or TuMV-CP Confer RNA-Mediated Multiple Resistance.

5 Transgenic plants with various N gene fragments
(2/2N, 3/4N, and 5/8N) fused to the 3'-end of the GFP
confer *Tospovirus* resistance in both R0 and R1 progenies
(Tables 3 and 4). English et al., "Suppression of Virus
10 Accumulation in Transgenic Plants Exhibiting Silencing of
Nuclear Genes," Plant Cell, 8:179-88 (1996), which is
hereby incorporated by reference, reports that transgenic
plants with silenced transgene can inactivate a chimeric
virus containing the transgene sequence since the
15 degrading mechanism in the silenced plants can recognize
the silenced sequence in the incoming chimeric virus. To
determine whether the transgenic plants with GFP/N
fusions can be resistant to TSWV as well as a chimeric
virus with GFP sequence since both the GFP and N fragment
20 were silenced in the TSWV resistance plants (Fig. 5), R2
transgenic plants with GFP/N fusions were inoculated with
TSWV, TMV-GFP, and TMV-GFP-NP (Figure 7). As shown in
Table 5, transgenic plants with GFP/N fusions are
resistant to both TSWV and TMV-GFP. This data shows that
25 small N fragments linked with a silencer (here GFP) can
confer multiple resistance in transgenic plants.

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Table 5. Reactions of R2 progeny of transgenic plants expressing GFP-2/2N, GFP-3/4N and GFP-5/8N to TSWV, TMV-GFP, and TMV-GFP-NP

	TSWV			TMV-GFP			TMV-GFP-NP		
	n	R	S	n	R	S	n	R	S
5	GFP-2/2N 4-11(8) 373			NT			NT		
	GFP-3/4N 3-10(5) 193			4	4	0	4	4	0
10	3-10(6) 250			NT			NT		
	GFP-5/8N 2-6(1) 3			4	4	0	4	4	0
	control			12	1	11	12	1	11

15 TSWV-BL infected leaf extracts (1/30) (Pang et al., "Nontarget DNA Sequences Reduce the Transgene Length Necessary for RNA-Mediated
20 Tospovirus Resistance in Transgenic Plants, Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA, 94:8261-8266 (1997), which is hereby incorporated by reference)
or infectious transcripts of TMV-GFP produced by in vitro
transcription (Casper et al., "Expression of the Green Fluorescent
Protein-Encoding Gene from Tobacco Mosaic Virus-based Vector," Gene,
173:69-73 (1996), which is hereby incorporated by reference) were
25 applied to three upper leaves of *N. benthamiana*, at the 5-7 leaf
stage. Susceptible (S) plant show typical systemic symptoms 5-10
days after TSWV inoculation or show green fluorescence on inoculated
leaves 2-5 DPI and upper leaves 4-6 DPI when infected with TMV-GFP.
Resistant (R) plants remained symptomless at 30 DPI.

30 Other DNA transgenes (besides the GFP DNA)
could be used to link the N gene fragments and still
induce silencing. If the 'silencing' DNA is of viral
origin, it could also serve as a viral transgene for
35 imparting resistance, resulting in multiple resistance.
This was tested with the 1/4 and 1/8N gene fragments of
TSWV which were linked to the turnip mosaic potyvirus
(TuMV) coat protein gene and mobilized into *N.*
benthamiana (Figure 6). R1 progeny were inoculated with
40 TuMV or TSWV. Reactions of the inoculated R1 plants to
TSWV-BL and TuMV are summarized in Table 6. Unlike
negative control plants, which were completely
susceptible to the viruses, four lines of transgenic

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plants with TuMV CP-3/4N and one line of TuMV CP-5/8N
conferred resistance to TuMV as well as TSWV.

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Table 6. Reaction segment linked to CP of TuMV to inoculations with TuMV ESC8 and TSWV-BL

	Reaction to TSWV				Reaction to TuMV				
	# tested	S	D	R	# tested	S	D	R	
5	CP-3/4N								
	55-3	10	10	0	0	10	7	3	0
	55-4	11	5	4	2	12	7	2	3
10	55-23	12	12	0	0	12	12	0	0
	55-6	8	2	4	2	10	1	2	7
	55-10	12	12	0	0	10	3	7	0
	55-9	28	18	7	3	29	8	8	13
	55-17	16	14	1	1	16	6	2	8
15	55-21	13	13	0	0	21	5	3	13
	55-15	17	17	0	0	11	11	0	0
	55-20	14	14	0	0	17	4	0	13
	55-14	16	16	0	0	16	16	0	0
	55-19	17	17	0	0	18	18	0	0
20	55-8	16	16	0	0	20	3	9	8
	55-13	16	16	0	0	20	15	5	0
	55-16	16	16	0	0	19	10	7	2
	55-12	20	20	0	0	13	13	0	0
	55-2	17	17	0	0	15	15	0	0
25	55-11	19	19	0	0	23	4	12	7
	CP-5/8N								
	125-7	19	11	8	0	19	18	1	0
	125-8	15	15	0	0	16	16	0	0
	125-9	18	18	0	0	17	17	0	0
30	125-10	24	24	0	0	21	21	0	0
	125-11	12	12	0	0	14	14	0	0
	125-12	20	14	4	2	19	15	2	2
	125-13	14	14	0	0	14	14	0	0
	125-14	21	21	0	0	21	21	0	0
35	125-15	11	11	0	0	12	12	0	0
	125-17	17	17	0	0	11	11	0	0
	125-18	11	11	0	0	10	10	0	0
	125-19	11	11	0	0	9	9	0	0
	125-20	16	16	0	0	8	8	0	0
40	125-21	12	12	0	0	12	12	0	0

30-fold diluted leaf extracts of TuMV-ESC8 or TSWV-BL were applied to three upper leaves of the plants at the 5-7 leaf stages. Data were taken every other day for at least 45 days. The reactions could be grouped into three phenotypes: 1) Susceptible (S), typical systemic symptoms were observed at 5-8 days after inoculation; 2) Delayed

TABLE 6. REACTION

5 (D), systemic symptom was significantly delayed (3-16 days delayed compared to control susceptible plants); and 3) Resistant (R), the plants grew and developed normally throughout their life cycles even though some of them showed mild mosaic symptoms on the new growing leaves and disappeared when the leaves were fully expanded at the late developmental stages. Those mild mosaic symptoms did not seem to affect any phase of normal plant growth and development.

This data demonstrates the following points:

10 1) that gene silencing can be induced by the GFP, TSWV, and TuMV transgenes; 2) 1/2N gene lengths, but not 1/4N and 1/8N gene lengths, can confer resistance; 3) the
15 minimum length of viral transgene (TSWV N gene) that can confer resistance is significantly reduced (i.e. down to 1/8N gene) when it is linked to a DNA (i.e. GFP) that triggers post transcriptional gene silencing; and 4) the DNA that triggers silencing of the linked viral gene fragments can itself be a viral gene, as shown with TuMV. These results serve as the basis to develop a simple and
20 effective new strategy for engineering multiple virus resistance by linking several small viral DNA fragments with a silencer DNA (GFP, viral sequence, as well as any interesting gene from plants, animals, or other organisms). This data also raises the possibility of
25 developing a simple and effective new strategy for controlling and regulating gene expression, enzyme or protein production, and any kind of interesting phenotype in transgenic plants.

30 Inability of the small N gene fragments to induce transgene silencing can be due to their inefficient transcription in nuclei, inefficient processing/transport and/or less stability of their transcripts in the cytoplasm. This conclusion is consistent with the Northern Blot analysis, showing that
35 the transcript of the small transgenes accumulated at much lower levels in the cytoplasm than that of the large transgenes (Fig. 4). The reduced transcript accumulation of the small transgenes may result from steric interference of transcription initiation machinery

TSWV N gene

with the transcription termination machinery. Alternatively, the small N gene transcripts may lose critical RNA sequence elements required for effective mRNA processing, transport and/or stability, resulting in much less mature mRNA accumulation in the cytoplasms (Caponigro, G., et al., "Mechanisms and Control of mRNA Turnover in *Sacharomyces cerevisiae*," Microbiological Reviews 60:233-49 (1996), which is hereby incorporated by reference). The addition of the GFP gene to the small transgenes may simply enhance their ability to transcribe the transgene lengths, or the GFP gene may provide RNA sequence elements required for accumulation of the mature mRNA.

On the other hand, trans-inactivation of the silenced transgene requires much shorter sequence of homology. In this case, when expressed as a fusion with GFP, transgenes as short as 110 bp can trans-inactivate the incoming virus genome. This short homologous sequence presumably interacts with the incoming virus to form a RNA duplex, which serves as a target for cellular degradation. The observation that the smallest fusion transgene GFP-5/8N was inefficient in conferring virus resistance (Tables 3 and 4) indicates that 110 bp (1/8th NP) sequence of homology may be approaching the minimal length of homology required for trans-inactivation of the silenced genes (in this case the virus genome). This result is consistent with the recent observation of Sijen, T., et al., "RNA-Mediated Virus Resistance: Role of Repeated Transgene and Delineation of Targeted Regions," Plant Cell, 8:2227-94 (1996), which is hereby incorporated by reference. They showed that a small homologous sequence of only 60 nucleotides was sufficient to tag a recombinant PVX molecule for the gene-silencing-mediated elimination process. They also showed that the frequency and quality of resistance appeared to depend on

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both the length of the homologous sequence and the inoculum concentration.

Any part of the N gene (first half, middle, or second half) can confer post-transcriptional gene silencing-derived viral resistance (Table 2). This result suggests that the specific RNA secondary structure of the N gene sequence might not be necessary for inducing transgene silencing and viral resistance. Small fragments (110-235 bp) were ineffective when expressed alone but were effective when fused to the GFP gene for post-transcriptional gene silencing and viral resistance. Taken together, the post-transcriptional gene silencing-derived virus resistance is transgene length dependent. It also seems that any part of the N gene larger than 110 bp can confer resistance when it is fused with GFP. These results also indicate that any small part of the viral genome larger than a certain length might confer resistance when fused with a silencer DNA (e.g. GFP).

This study showed that homology-dependent virus resistance can be obtained by fusing small viral sequences to the GFP gene. This observation leads to the view that any viral sequence longer than 110 bp could confer RNA-mediated resistance when fused to stably expressed, normal length nonviral transgene. If it is true, it would significantly facilitate the engineering of viral resistance, because isolation of a specific viral gene such as coat protein gene or replicase gene can be very tedious, especially if the viral genome organization is not well characterized. It should be pointed out that the coat protein gene will continue to be one of the best choices for RNA-mediated resistance, because it is highly expressed and its transcript is presumably very stable in the infected cells.

Transgenic plants which show post-transcription gene silencing-derived resistance establish the highly

TABLE 2

resistant state and prevent virus replication. A
chimeric transgene consisting of a silencer DNA
(e.g., GFP) fused with various small nontranslatable
fragment viral genome would be preferred for viral
5 resistance. There are several advantages. First, the
silencer DNA can increase the induced gene silencing.
Second, the chimeric nature of the gene would provide
multiple virus resistance. Third, nontranslatable
construction produces no protein, thus reducing the
10 possible complementation of naturally occurring mutants
and transencapsidation of other viruses. Fourth, the
small fragment also reduces the possibility of
recombination with other viral genomes.

Although the invention has been described in
15 detail for the purpose of illustration, it is understood
that such detail is solely for that purpose, and
variations can be made therein by those skilled in the
art without departing from the spirit and scope of the
invention which is defined by the following claims.

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SEQUENCE LISTING

(1) GENERAL INFORMATION:

- (i) APPLICANT: Pang, Sheng-Zhi
Gonsalves, Dennis
Jan, Fuh-Jyh
- (ii) TITLE OF INVENTION: DNA CONSTRUCT TO CONFER
MULTIPLE TRAITS ON PLANTS
- (iii) NUMBER OF SEQUENCES: 18
- (iv) CORRESPONDENCE ADDRESS:
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 - (F) ZIP: 14603
- (v) COMPUTER READABLE FORM:
 - (A) MEDIUM TYPE: Floppy disk
 - (B) COMPUTER: IBM PC compatible
 - (C) OPERATING SYSTEM: PC-DOS/MS-DOS
 - (D) SOFTWARE: PatentIn Release #1.0, Version #1.30
- (vi) CURRENT APPLICATION DATA:
 - (A) APPLICATION NUMBER:
 - (B) FILING DATE:
 - (C) CLASSIFICATION:
- (vii) PRIOR APPLICATION DATA:
 - (A) APPLICATION NUMBER: US 60/035,350
 - (B) FILING DATE: 19-FEB-1997
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 - (A) APPLICATION NUMBER: US 60/062,870
 - (B) FILING DATE: 21-OCT-1997
- (viii) ATTORNEY/AGENT INFORMATION:
 - (A) NAME: Goldman, Michael L.
 - (B) REGISTRATION NUMBER: 30,727
 - (C) REFERENCE/DOCKET NUMBER: 19603/1552
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(2) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO:1:

- (i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:
 - (A) LENGTH: 46 base pairs
 - (B) TYPE: nucleic acid
 - (C) STRANDEDNESS: single
 - (D) TOPOLOGY: linear

(ii) MOLECULE TYPE: cDNA

(xi) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION: SEQ ID NO:1:

AGCTAATCTA GAACCATGGA TGACTCACTA AGGAAAGCAT TGTTGC

46

(2) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO:2:

- (i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:
 - (A) LENGTH: 38 base pairs
 - (B) TYPE: nucleic acid
 - (C) STRANDEDNESS: single
 - (D) TOPOLOGY: linear

(ii) MOLECULE TYPE: cDNA

(xi) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION: SEQ ID NO:2:

TACAGTTCTA GAACCATGGT CTGGAAAACC TTGACCAG

38

(2) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO:3:

- (i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:
 - (A) LENGTH: 41 base pairs
 - (B) TYPE: nucleic acid
 - (C) STRANDEDNESS: single
 - (D) TOPOLOGY: linear

(ii) MOLECULE TYPE: cDNA

(xi) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION: SEQ ID NO:3:

TACAGTTCTA GAACCATGGT AAAGCGATTT TACTTTTGGT A

41

(2) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO:4:

- (i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:
 - (A) LENGTH: 49 base pairs
 - (B) TYPE: nucleic acid

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- (C) STRANDEDNESS: single
- (D) TOPOLOGY: linear

(ii) MOLECULE TYPE: cDNA

(xi) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION: SEQ ID NO:4:

AGATTCTCTA GACCATGGTG ACTTGATGAG CAAAGTCTGT GAGGCTTGC

49

(2) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO:5:

- (i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:
 - (A) LENGTH: 38 base pairs
 - (B) TYPE: nucleic acid
 - (C) STRANDEDNESS: single
 - (D) TOPOLOGY: linear

(ii) MOLECULE TYPE: cDNA

(xi) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION: SEQ ID NO:5:

TACAGTTCTA GAACCATGGA AAATACAAGG ATCTCGGG

38

(2) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO:6:

- (i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:
 - (A) LENGTH: 41 base pairs
 - (B) TYPE: nucleic acid
 - (C) STRANDEDNESS: single
 - (D) TOPOLOGY: linear

(ii) MOLECULE TYPE: cDNA

(xi) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION: SEQ ID NO:6:

TACAGTTCTA GAACCATGGT AGAAGGGGAA AGAGTATGCT G

41

(2) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO:7:

- (i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:
 - (A) LENGTH: 36 base pairs
 - (B) TYPE: nucleic acid
 - (C) STRANDEDNESS: single
 - (D) TOPOLOGY: linear

(ii) MOLECULE TYPE: cDNA

FOOBB*3F2E1660

(xi) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION: SEQ ID NO:7:

AGCATTGGAT CCATGGTTAA CACACTAAGC AAGCAC

36

(2) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO:8:

- (i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:
 - (A) LENGTH: 36 base pairs
 - (B) TYPE: nucleic acid
 - (C) STRANDEDNESS: single
 - (D) TOPOLOGY: linear

(ii) MOLECULE TYPE: cDNA

(xi) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION: SEQ ID NO:8:

TCTTGAGGAT CCATGGCTGA TCTTCATTCA TTTCAA

36

(2) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO:9:

- (i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:
 - (A) LENGTH: 36 base pairs
 - (B) TYPE: nucleic acid
 - (C) STRANDEDNESS: single
 - (D) TOPOLOGY: linear

(ii) MOLECULE TYPE: cDNA

(xi) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION: SEQ ID NO:9:

TCTTGAGGAT CCATGGATCC TGATATATAG CCAAGA

36

(2) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO:10:

- (i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:
 - (A) LENGTH: 39 base pairs
 - (B) TYPE: nucleic acid
 - (C) STRANDEDNESS: single
 - (D) TOPOLOGY: linear

(ii) MOLECULE TYPE: cDNA

(xi) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION: SEQ ID NO:10:

TACAGTGGAT CCATGGTTAA GGTAATCCAT AGGCTTGAC

39

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- (C) STRANDEDNESS: single
- (D) TOPOLOGY: linear

(ii) MOLECULE TYPE: cDNA

(xi) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION: SEQ ID NO:14:

AGCATTGGAT CCATGGTTAG TTACCTAGTT TTCTTTTCAG CACAGTGCAA ACT

53

(2) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO:15:

- (i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:
 - (A) LENGTH: 30 base pairs
 - (B) TYPE: nucleic acid
 - (C) STRANDEDNESS: single
 - (D) TOPOLOGY: linear

(ii) MOLECULE TYPE: cDNA

(xi) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION: SEQ ID NO:15:

TTGACTCCAT GGCAGGTGAA ACGCTTGACG

30

(2) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO:16:

- (i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:
 - (A) LENGTH: 33 base pairs
 - (B) TYPE: nucleic acid
 - (C) STRANDEDNESS: single
 - (D) TOPOLOGY: linear

(ii) MOLECULE TYPE: cDNA

(xi) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION: SEQ ID NO:16:

GTCGTACCAT GCGGAGAATA CTAACGAGTA AAC

33

(2) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO:17:

- (i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:
 - (A) LENGTH: 44 base pairs
 - (B) TYPE: nucleic acid
 - (C) STRANDEDNESS: single
 - (D) TOPOLOGY: linear

(ii) MOLECULE TYPE: cDNA

(xi) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION: SEQ ID NO:17:

TGAACATCTA GAACCATGGG TAAAGGAGAA GAACTTTTCA CTGG

44

(2) INFORMATION FOR SEQ ID NO:18:

(i) SEQUENCE CHARACTERISTICS:

- (A) LENGTH: 44 base pairs
- (B) TYPE: nucleic acid
- (C) STRANDEDNESS: single
- (D) TOPOLOGY: linear

(ii) MOLECULE TYPE: cDNA

(xi) SEQUENCE DESCRIPTION: SEQ ID NO:18:

TGAACAGGAT CCATGGTCTA CGAATGCTAT TATTTGTATA GTTC

44

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